

## D. H. LAWRENCE'S PHILOSOPHY AS EXPRESSED IN HIS POETRY

### I. A NEGLECTED POETRY

BOOKS by D. H. Lawrence would fill a good-sized shelf, and books about him would fill an even larger shelf. Ten years after his death an editorial writer in the *Saturday Review of Literature* said that he has been the subject of "more books than any other writer since Byron";<sup>1</sup> and now, twenty years after his death, the same magazine remarks that "Lawrence's reputation is on the upswing . . . and in many countries he has 'become a standard author'."<sup>2</sup> A steady trickle of essays about him continues to appear in the popular as well as the learned journals of America, England, and the Continent, and anthologies and new printings of his work continue to issue from the presses.

Most curiously, however, very little of all that has been written about him deals with his poetry. A few reviews of poetical volumes as they appeared, a few perfunctory comments in the midst of general discussions, a few introductory paragraphs in anthologies—and that is the limit of attention that criticism has accorded Lawrence's poetry. Yet he wrote 10 volumes of poetry; his *Collected Poems* and his *Last Poems* fill over 800 pages; the refrain of most writers about his prose is that he is "a poet even in his novels"; and poets (like W. H. Auden, C. Day Lewis, Humbert Wolfe, Stephen Spender, Ford Madox Ford, Louise Bogan, and Horace Gregory<sup>3</sup>) have been his most consistent defenders.

Professor William York Tindall, who has written the most elaborate study<sup>4</sup> of Lawrence's thought that has yet been published, virtually ignores the poetry. "Since the evidence in verse is meager," he says, "and no more than parallel to

that of the prose, I have confined my remarks to the prose, citing poetical evidence in the notes."<sup>5</sup> He must consider the evidence in the poems meager indeed, for only 7 of the 400 notes in his volume refer to poems by Lawrence.

Tindall's book has a special importance because it is the only long and scholarly treatment in English of Lawrence the Thinker as opposed to Lawrence the Personality. In a way, therefore, the present paper, by dealing with Lawrence's poems exclusively, is an attempt to supplement Tindall's book. It explores an area that Tindall neglected and that no one else has seriously studied. In a way, too, this paper may end by becoming a slight antidote to Tindall. For, as David Garnett says, Lawrence "is one of the easiest of great writers to get hold of by the wrong end"<sup>6</sup>—and Tindall, for all his scholarship, seems to have done just that. Frieda Lawrence said of Tindall that he had "no enthusiasm, no sympathy for his subject. Lawrence is to him a bad writer, a bad thinker; and he thoroughly dislikes Lawrence as a man."<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps Tindall made the initial error of trying to evaluate Lawrence as a systematic rationalist, instead of realizing that Lawrence can never be understood (any more than Blake can be understood) unless he is viewed as a poet. But Lawrence's poetry discourages philosophical analysis—just because it *is* poetry and not philosophy. The difficulty is made even worse by the fact that not one of his poems really develops any considerable part of his thought—as, for example, the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Tintern Abbey" develop certain aspects of each author's thought. Each of Lawrence's poems is like a highly colored fragment of some unassembled whole. To put the fragments together, to construct from them the complete philosophical mosaic, is not an easy task. At any rate, it is one that students of Lawrence have shunned heretofore.

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How early Lawrence formulated the essential elements of his thought cannot be told from his poetry. Comparison of the early poems—that is, up to about 1917—with the prose of the same period shows that the prose considerably antedates the poetry in expressing anything like a philosophy. As a matter of fact, some of the letters (as edited and published by Aldous Huxley in 1932) show that Lawrence had adopted his basic ideas as early as 1913, at least. But not until five or six years later does his poetry become a vehicle for constant expression of his ideas. For this very reason, his poems, largely concerned as they are with philosophical ideas only after those ideas have matured and fixed themselves in Lawrence's mind, are a better source, in some ways, for study of Lawrence's thought than are his prose works.

### II. RELIGION AND METAPHYSICS

Lawrence was born in 1885 and died in 1930. During his lifetime the culture of western Europe underwent developments and received shocks hardly paralleled since the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The Darwinian theory of evolution, with its inevitable undermining of old Christian orthodoxy, finally prevailed in the minds of informed and intelligent men; the industrialization and mechanization of society at last triumphed unmistakably; socialism became a force to be reckoned with; Freudian psychology discovered a whole vast continent of mind that had formerly been unsuspected; the First World War came at a time when many thinking people had convinced themselves that wars were no longer conceivable among civilized peoples; and the bolsheviks succeeded in setting up a stable government in Russia. Every one of these forces and events had its effect upon Lawrence; and his complex and manifold reactions to them constitute the body of his thought.

Though it seems imposible to define precisely the stages of Lawrence's poetic development, his earliest work suggested the poetry of the 1890's, and from there he passed on to a kind of rugged Georgianism (he was represented in *Georgian Poetry*); then to imagism; then to certain passionate, fiercely autobiographical poems that brought him up to about 1920; and then to ten years of intensely poetic *matter* expressed in a loose Whitmanesque *manner* that has the ease and naturalness of good conversation, and the quick, sharp brilliance of genius.

Brought up by a strictly orthodox Methodist mother, he could write, long after he had ceased believing in Christ as anything more than "one of Nature's phenomena,"<sup>8</sup>

The Cross, the Cross  
Goes deeper than we know.<sup>9</sup>

And he always maintained that he was "a profoundly religious man," and that "One has to be so terribly religious to be an artist."<sup>10</sup> But his religion was far from being formal and orthodox; it was essentially mystical, in the same way that Shelley's, Emerson's, Francis Thompson's, Yeats', A. E.'s, and even Wordsworth's religions were mystical. Apparently Tindall (in the first chapter of his book) had no real understanding of the nature of mysticism, expected Lawrence to be quite logical in his religion, and would not have comprehended such lines as these by Lawrence:

But to something unseen, unknown, creative  
from which I feel I am derivative  
I feel absolute reverence. Say no more!<sup>11</sup>

There is no logic in such lines, or in the following:

Forever nameless  
Forever unknown  
Forever unconceived

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Forever unrepresented  
Yet forever felt in the soul.<sup>12</sup>

Lawrence's religion was real enough. But it was not Christian. His objection to modern Christianity was that it knows only "the useful Godhead of Providence"; it has lost the "Creative Godhead"<sup>13</sup> which is "the centre of all things."<sup>14</sup>

Lawrence would certainly emphasize "*all* things"—not merely those things which orthodox Christianity would label "good." Lawrence's Creative Godhead is the Life Force of the universe. It manifests itself in every innate and irresistible impulse (or urge, or growth, or instinct, or longing) that dwells within, or finds expression in, material beauty strong, primitive, and unspoiled.<sup>15</sup> Spirit and matter are not two things; they are one—or rather, spirit has no existence until the vague demiurge of the universe expresses itself in a material form that is both spirit and body:

There is no god  
apart from poppies and flying fish,  
men singing songs, and women brushing their hair in the sun.  
The lovely things are god that has come to pass, like  
Jesus came.<sup>16</sup>

Far from being an anti-materialist (as Tindall tries to prove in the second chapter of his book) Lawrence is primarily and absolutely a materialist in the strict, literal sense of that word. The central value in his system is the material, concrete, sensuously experienced substance of the universe. But like Wordsworth, like many other mystics who can perceive the divine One manifesting itself in the various All, Lawrence may perceive a spirit interfusing or being all material things.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the material things are the essential reality, and the divine spirit has reality only in them:

They say that reality exists only in the spirit  
that corporal existence is a kind of death

that pure being is bodiless  
 that the idea of the form precedes the form substantial.  
 But what nonsense it is.<sup>18</sup>

Nothing is more characteristic of Lawrence (in both his poetry and his prose) than this reverence for material things that spring directly from the Life Urge—that is, for every aspect of nature: the gentle and the strong, the beautiful and the ugly, the highly developed and the degenerate, the symmetrical and the grotesque, the inspiring and sometimes even the disgusting. All these aspects of nature fill the volume of poems called *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), and they appear again and again in all the other volumes.

He reveres nature because nature is one with, and springs from, God; and "God is a great urge, wonderful, mysterious, magnificent."<sup>19</sup> God is not a *mind*;<sup>20</sup> God is creative force.<sup>21</sup> God is "nameless and imageless";<sup>22</sup> God is the *living* God, the God of Life, the Force that creates life: God is Life.<sup>23</sup> "Lawrence's principal message was one of life."<sup>24</sup>

To Lawrence, even death is life. For evil men (that is, for egotistical, self-sufficient men who have never had any communion with the Life Force) death is a torture-chamber wherein "their hardened souls are washed with fire . . . till they are softened back to life-stuff again";<sup>25</sup> and for good men (those who have lived in knowledge and reverence of the Life Force) death is an "unfolding . . . to something flowery and fulfilled." In life

Men prevent one another from being men  
 but in the great spaces of death  
 the winds of the afterwards kiss us into blossom of mankind.<sup>26</sup>

"At the core of everything" lies "dark oblivion," the ultimate reality and the ultimate blessing;<sup>27</sup> but out of this oblivion rises procreation;<sup>28</sup> and out of it the soul, having died, rises like a mist into a more lovely life.<sup>29</sup>

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It is his pantheistic, mystical, unswerving, and wholly sincere worship of life and the Life Force that lies at the root of all Lawrence's thinking. Illogical it may be, impracticable it certainly is, and shocking in some of its ramifications it has been; but it is not the pure nonsense that some critics have thought it.

### III. ROMANTIC PRIMITIVISM

Horace Gregory calls Lawrence "a great English poet in the Romantic tradition," and goes on to say, "Like most Romantic poets, Lawrence had a strong nostalgia for the past—not for the immediate past, or the Hellenic-Christian culture that had historical reference to his own civilization . . . his was a biological past: 'the blood, the flesh' of man, of animals, of flowers. A union with this life force, this dark, unseen flow . . . was a means of justifying human life and breaking down walls of human isolation."<sup>30</sup>

This is a very discerning analysis that connects Lawrence with his proper literary tradition. A respecter of all that is elemental and primal in human life, Lawrence would undoubtedly have cried a hearty "Amen!" to Burns'

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire!  
That's a' the learning I desire.

And he would have approved equally of Wordsworth's

One impulse from a vernal wood  
Can teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Yet many critics (including Tindall) have attacked Lawrence quite bitterly for his distrust of scientific logic and intellect, and his reliance on the innate, instinctive impulses of man. The point is that Lawrence, in his reverence for all

things in nature, all things created by the Life Force, reveres the elemental nature of man. He thinks that man is—by nature, because he is a part of nature—a creature who rests naturally in “the hands of the living God.”<sup>31</sup>

Like the earlier Romantics, he would have liked to believe that simple and primitive men are closer to the living God than are men “corrupted by civilization.” Any conviction he may have had on this subject, however, is reserved almost entirely for his prose. In a few of his earlier poems<sup>32</sup> there appears some vague feeling that simple working-men help bring our age into closer communion with the Life Force; and in a later poem called “Amo Sacrum Vulgus” he sings (almost like Carl Sandburg) the joyous refrain, “The people, the people, the people!”<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, in far the greater part of his poetry he escapes those Romantic fallacies of the Noble Savage, the Child of Nature, and the Common Man that the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries fell into. The retreat toward the Life Force, he realizes, must carry farther than simplicity or savagery. Plants and animals (unconscious, not self-conscious, not egotistical, without will) live closer to the center of the Life Force than even simple men or savages. Plants and animals, therefore, interest him, or even inspire him, as much as do elemental people, or people who live according to their elemental impulses.

But those critics of Lawrence (and they seem to be in the majority) who think that he advocates humanity’s descending to the level of plants and animals, and abandoning thought, intellect, and nobility, do not understand him. He would not have a tortoise try to be an elephant, nor would he have a man try to be anything but a man. Intellect is a human trait, and Lawrence would have human beings use their intellect:



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Thought, I love thought.

But not the jaggling and twisting of already existent ideas . . .

Thought is the welling up of unknown life into the consciousness

Thought is the testing of statements on the touchstone of conscience

Thought is gazing on the face of life, and reading what can be read,

Thought is pondering over experience and coming to conclusion . . .

Thought is man in his wholeness wholly attending.<sup>34</sup>

It would be difficult to find a more intelligent, a more cleanly intellectual definition of thought than this. Lawrence did not wish men to be animals:

Oh, sacrifice not that which is noble and generous and spontaneous  
in humanity

but that which is mean and base and squalid and degenerate.<sup>35</sup>

An unregenerate optimist concerning the deep nature of man, he wished merely that man would be as godlike as he is capable of being:

Now let me be myself,

now let me be myself and flicker forth

now let me be myself, in the being, one of the gods.<sup>36</sup>

Diana Trilling was quite right when she said, a few years ago, that Lawrence believed "Our trouble is not that we know too much but that we do not know enough."<sup>37</sup>

### IV. GOOD AND EVIL IN INDIVIDUAL AND IN SOCIETY

Both Lawrence and his readers have suffered because Lawrence found no developed terminology to express his meanings. Lacking a language, he could never quite clarify what he meant by the elemental Life Force, or by that portion of it which is contained in all life. Sometimes he called this latter "blood." Nor could he easily explain what he meant by an individual's recovering, or rediscovering, the elemental force within himself. He usually called the process "getting in touch";<sup>38</sup> later in life, he was likely to call it being "in the hands of God."<sup>39</sup>

Lawrence's entire religion, all of his ethics, all of his mental endeavor, all of his message for his time consists in striving to be, and in urging others to be, "in touch." "We don't exist unless we are deeply and sensually in touch."<sup>40</sup> To Lawrence, being "in touch" is as "the knowledge of God" to a Christian saint. It is living in the house of God

Like a cat asleep on a chair  
at peace, in peace  
and at one with the master of the house . . .  
feeling the presence of the living God  
like a great reassurance  
a deep calm in the heart.<sup>41</sup>

It is living life deeply, experiencing life intensely, understanding life with the entire personality, missing nothing of life, adjusting all the elements of mind and heart and body to one another, drinking life to the lees:

And life is for delight and bliss  
and dread, and the dark, rolling ominousness of doom  
and the bright dawning of delight again.<sup>42</sup>

Life is for kissing and for horrid strife.  
Life is for angels and the Sunderers  
Life is for the daimons and the demons  
those that put honey on your lips and those that put salt.<sup>43</sup>

But Lawrence feels that only a few people are "in touch," that our entire civilization is out of touch; somewhere, long ago, man took the wrong turning and wandered away from God, "out of touch," and has been wandering farther ever since. A hundred evils that have developed in man and in his society are still preventing men from coming "in touch." Lawrence attacks these evils in a very large number of his later poems; and it is these attacks, more than anything else he has written, that have caused him to be frequently misunderstood, disliked, and accused of being immoral.

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Like other mystics, he distrusts the final authority of mind. "The mind is touchless."<sup>44</sup> Nowhere in his poetry, however, is Lawrence guilty of what he has been accused of—waging "a crusade against mind,"<sup>45</sup> of "hating the world of mind."<sup>46</sup> What he actually believes is what all mystics and all romantics have always believed: that the mind with its knowledge is inadequate to discover the ultimate truth, to achieve the final salvation. Burns said the same thing in his remarks on schools and learning in the "Epistle to John Lapraik"—and Lawrence:

All that we know is nothing, we are merely crammed wastepaper  
baskets

Unless we are in touch with that which laughs at all our knowing.<sup>47</sup>

The title of another of his poems is "Man Is More than Homo Sapiens." He does not wish to abandon mind and knowledge, but to use them for high purposes that are beyond mind and knowledge:

You must fuse mind and wit with all the senses  
before you can feel truth.<sup>48</sup>

And truth "alone satisfies in the end."<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the generally circulated idea that Lawrence crusades against mind comes from the fact that (like the Christian who believes that the sinner must become as a little child again before he can be saved) Lawrence demands the casting-off of egotism and self-sufficiency, the regeneration in elemental oblivion, a completely new start, before man can really be "in touch" with God.<sup>50</sup>

Lawrence has been accused of rejecting science; and he does reject the science that merely classifies and categorizes individual things without comprehending their individuality.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, he accepts biology—the dominant science of his day—with its central theory of evolution. Nor

can one understand Lawrence without understanding the theory of evolution; his poetry is full of it.

The history of the cosmos  
is the history of the struggle of becoming.<sup>52</sup>

All the sensuous world, God himself, was evolved through struggle from "the dim flux of unformed life"; God himself is still evolving; and man evolves with God.<sup>53</sup>

The failure of contemporary intellect, Lawrence believes, is not that it knows too much, but that it has settled into "the rigidity of fixed ideas."<sup>54</sup> It no longer actually feels or believes what it worships as truth; it is the perpetual and universal victim of its own lies, self-deceit, and hypocrisy. "What has killed mankind . . . is lies."<sup>55</sup> Lies about loving our neighbor, lies about loving our husband or wife, lies in our laughter, lies in our talk, lies in our singing, lies in our moralizing, lies in our faithfulness to the truth of yesterday that has become the untruth of today. The world is caught in a web of lies. Valuing truth as he does, Lawrence sneers at, snarls at, or rails at conventional men for what he considers their inward rottenness of spirit and their outward sanctimoniousness of behavior—for their pride in sin, their worship of property, their crowd-thinking, their insensitiveness to beauty, their bigotry, their self-satisfaction, their vapid pleasures, their desire to hurt all that is not like themselves, their bland hypocrisy, their pretentiousness, their cowardice in the face of both mystery and truth, their love of the ugly and the unimportant.<sup>56</sup> Modern men are "tarnished with centuries of conventionality,"<sup>57</sup> which makes them "go counter to their own deepest consciousness."<sup>58</sup>

All these lies are a symptom of that mortal disease, that "pure evil," of man not "in touch"—of man who has separated himself from the sensual Life Force, and is living as a self-

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important, self-reliant, self-centered ego—a “self-apart-from-God.” Again language fails Lawrence here, and he has difficulty defining this “obscene ego” that has lost touch with all the beautiful, vital, sensual, elemental, instinctive, creative force of the universe, and is living separately within a pattern of readymade customs. Lawrence speaks of this sort of man as having “absolute self-awareness,” “absolute freedom,” “self-consciousness”—as being “self-willed,” “self-motived,” “self-centered.” To be thus separate from God, living in a world made not by God but by man, is the ultimate evil.<sup>59</sup>

And this world that egoistic man has created and lives in—what is it like? For one thing, it is a machine world—and Lawrence hates machines with a living passion. They are bloodless, having no possible connection with the elemental Life Force; they, and the making of them, are about to “reduce the world to grey ash”; they destroy natural beauty; they enslave the bodies and stupefy the minds of those that work for them; they become models on which men pattern their own machine lives<sup>60</sup>—these are some of the reasons why Lawrence hates machines.

For another thing, this world of men-apart-from-God is a world in which crowds, mobs, and masses have replaced the separateness and the individuality which every creature must preserve if he is to be “in touch” with God. The breath of the crowd defiles and salvation is to be found only in “pure aloneness.”<sup>61</sup> Yet the “great word of our civilization” is *en masse*, and the irresistible tendency of the time is toward centralization.<sup>62</sup>

Finally, people themselves, corrupted by the machines (radio, cinema, automobile, factory, and daily newspaper) have lost all “touch” with God, and have become repulsive.

By endless repetition they have sanctified ancient mistakes;<sup>63</sup> they resent the different and the superior;<sup>64</sup> they are robots governed by robots;<sup>65</sup> they have become identical with the machines that they serve<sup>66</sup>—machine people destroying the earth's natural beauty,<sup>67</sup> hating one another and making revolutions and wars,<sup>68</sup> fighting over property.<sup>69</sup> Regarding them as the Yahoos of the modern world, Lawrence does not pretend either to value or to love most of his fellow men:

You tell me every man has a soul to save?

I tell you, not one man in a thousand has even a soul to lose.<sup>70</sup>

Here Lawrence comes to the only real antinomy in his system. Some of his poems are more passionately sympathetic with working-people caught in the industrial vortex than are any other English poems since Shelley.<sup>71</sup> Yet he sees that all these people, once they are hooked and caught by the machines, are lost; they are so much divine material wasted and made worthless. Therefore, he sometimes feels no respect for them, feels no Christian obligation toward them. "Most men don't matter at all"; they "are not my fellow-men, and I repudiate them as such."<sup>72</sup> This is a bitter and cruel attitude, and it is not consistent with the other poems about working people.

## V. POLITICS

This may be a good place to say something about Lawrence's political beliefs. They have often been called fascist. He wants each individual to be "in touch" with God; and he is Protestant enough to think that getting "in touch" is an individual affair.<sup>73</sup> When each man is "in touch"; when each man reveres earth, beauty, and love; when each man is passionately and holily alive; when each man, by being "in touch" with God, is "in touch" with all creation, which is

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God—there will be no disrespect for any created being, no urge toward centralizing,<sup>74</sup> no “obsession of oneness.”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, there will be no war, no “universalism and cosmopolitanism,” but only “a democracy of men, a democracy of touch.”<sup>76</sup> He is impatient with both the “hard-boiled conservatives” and the “soft-boiled liberals”;<sup>77</sup> and he loathes both the bourgeois and the bolshevist<sup>78</sup> though he confesses that, if he had to choose between them, he would choose the bourgeois because the bourgeois would interfere with him less.<sup>79</sup> In short, therefore, his ideal state would be one of virtually complete individualism in which all men, being “in touch,” would have as little government as possible. This is hardly fascism.

On the other hand, Lawrence is realist enough to see that a vast number of robot-men now living can never succeed in getting “in touch”;<sup>80</sup> they will remain forever robot-men—and utopia is, accordingly, impossible. Nevertheless, there remain two worthwhile classes of people: those few “who look into the eyes of the gods,” and “those who look into the eyes of the few.”<sup>81</sup> But all men must learn to obey, “not a boss, but the gleam of life” on the face of those men who have looked into the eyes of the gods.<sup>82</sup> This is not fascism, either. It is more like Plato's Republic; and the leaders are not “bosses” but heroes of mind and spirit—like Jesus, or Plato himself, or Shakespeare—whose eyes have seen God, and from whom lesser men may catch some of the divine gleam. It has been unfortunate for Lawrence that this visionary political scheme of his has been mistaken for fascism. Even Karl Shapiro has mistaken it, and has been one of the few poets who have written unfavorably about Lawrence.<sup>83</sup>

Lawrence's entire political philosophy is one of individualism—an impracticable and impossible individualism. He him-

self desires only to be left alone to discover God and beauty for himself, and his highest hope for other men is that they may have the same desire. Political revolutions are not the answer; revolutions are the work of robots.<sup>84</sup> Men really alive and "in touch" don't bother about such matters.

## VI. LOVE

Lawrence is, of course, best, if not most favorably, known as a writer on sex. His most widely read novels revolve about the problem, and a very large portion of his poetry (up to about 1920) deals with it. Reasons why Lawrence was attracted to sex are several. First, he was wise enough to perceive, before the fact was generally admitted in England, that sex is extremely important in man's psychology; next, he saw that the dishonest conventionalities and hypocritical evasions which, he believed, characterize modern civilization were most glaringly apparent in relation to sex; third, the concept of sex is intimately associated with the generative and creative Life Force that lies at the center of Lawrence's philosophy; and finally, Lawrence began writing at just that period when Freudian psychology was being introduced into England, and he was immensely stimulated by it. The Freudian concept of the Unconscious out of which human personality springs was exactly in line with Lawrence's own concept of being "in touch" with the deeper, more elemental portions of the personality. It should be noted, however, that Lawrence, in his prose works if not in his poetry, rejected Freud's interpretation of the Unconscious as being "Nothing but a huge slimy serpent of sex, and heaps of excrement, and a myriad repulsive little horrors."<sup>85</sup> Lawrence's own Unconscious is very different.

The chief problem of modern man, and of Lawrence as



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an individual, is to break from under the all but impenetrable and immovable pyramid of tradition, egoism, falsity, and misunderstanding under which modern love and sex are buried, and to come "in touch" with the Life Force as healthily and normally as an animal, and as quietly and beautifully as a flower. We must learn to satisfy the sex instinct "with pure, real satisfaction, or perish, there is no alternative."<sup>86</sup> He studies the problem, probes it, speculates about it, and through much of his career writes about it. He approaches it from every possible angle. With him love is, in turn, sadism, masochism, autoeroticism, nympholepsy, the Oedipus complex, heterosexuality, and every other noun in psychoanalytic jargon.<sup>87</sup> It is terror, an unbearable desire, a renunciation, an abandonment, a hatred, a comfort, a delight, a wisdom, a frustration, an anguish, a jealousy, a humiliation, a pride.<sup>88</sup>

The philosophy of love that he finally evolves is poles removed from the animalism that many of his critics have tried to find in him. In his philosophy, love is not an emotion which unifies two people and makes them mutually absorb each other. Such love is disease and death. Rather, says the poet, when a man and a woman have learned to love each other perfectly, there comes into being the kind of individual who is "in touch" with God, and who is Lawrence's ideal.

Then, we shall be two and distinct, we shall have each our separate being,

And that will be pure existence, real liberty.

Till then, we are confused, a mixture, unresolved, unextricated one from the other.

It is in pure, unutterable resolvedness, that one is free,

Not in mixing, merging, not in similarity.<sup>89</sup>

This philosophy of love (not very different from Browning's, by the way) makes a consistent pattern with the rest of Lawrence's essentially individualistic philosophy. In it the

satisfaction of the mere primary sex urge is only one of the many ways in which complex human nature achieves "real liberty." Mr. Louis Untermeyer was as wrong as it was possible for a critic to be when he wrote that Lawrence's "gamut has never extended beyond sex."<sup>90</sup>

#### VII. INDEBTEDNESS AND ORIGINALITY

The sources of Lawrence's philosophical system are many. Yet, like Shakespeare, he never takes from other writers without adding something of his own, and becoming a unique original.

The mystical element in his philosophy is derived from a long European tradition in religion and in literature. But the passionate materialism that Lawrence develops from his mystical faith is new.

From orthodox Christianity itself Lawrence borrows the idea of escaping from worldly vanity, returning to God, and undergoing a spiritual rebirth. But in Lawrence's thought this process of regeneration is conceived in terms that are completely unorthodox.

His concept of the Life Force is derived from a great deal of biological thinking in the previous century, as well as from Bergson and his *élan vital* in the present century. But Lawrence fuses this concept with the Romanticists' adoration of nature as a proto-divinity in an alliance quite new to modern thought.

His advocacy of return to the elemental in man is a continuation of the Romantic tradition. But it is an extension as well as a continuation: it would return to an elementalness more profound, more biological, than any that the Romanticists advocated.

His ideal of being "in touch" with the divine is related to a great many reforming ideals of a great many reformers

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in the history of human thought. But in Lawrence it encompasses not merely some selected "good" traits of human nature, but the whole man—body, mind, and spirit—flesh, knowledge, and intuition—the material world, human intellect, and religion.

Criticisms of the hypocrisy and folly of society are as old as society itself, and a good many of the suggested cures have involved a "return to nature." But very few of the advocates of a "return to nature" have been so courageous as Lawrence in dealing with society's very first and most essential relationship (without which there would be no society)—the relationship of men and women.

It is true that most of Lawrence's answers to the social problems of his time and ours are as impracticable as the answers that most other social philosophers have given. Society cannot and will not need Lawrence. Indeed, Lawrence never thought it would. His answers are those of an individualist writing for individuals. And any individual can find in Lawrence's poetry a philosophical system that is original, consistent, complex, and stimulating.

GEORGE G. WILLIAMS

### NOTES

In the following notes Lawrence's *Collected Poems* (Martin Secker, London, 1933) will be referred to by the Roman numeral "I." The *Last Poems* (edited by Richard Aldington and Giuseppe Orioli, The Viking Press, New York, 1933) will be referred to by the Roman numeral "II."

1. *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXI, 8 (March 2, 1940).
2. "Poet to Vagabond to Legend," by Harry Thornton Moore, *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXXIII, 20 (April 29, 1950).
3. Auden: *Nation*, CLXIV, 482 (April 26, 1947).  
Lewis: "A Hope for Poetry," *Collected Poems* (1935).  
Wolfe: *Nineteenth Century*, CVII, 568 (April, 1930).  
Spender: "Notes on D. H. Lawrence," *The Destructive Element* (1935).  
Ford: *American Mercury* XXXVIII, 167 (June, 1936).

- Bogan: *Nation*, CXLIX (October 7, 1939).  
 Gregory: *New Republic*, LXXIII, 133 (December 14, 1932).
4. *D. H. Lawrence and Susan His Cow* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1939).
  5. Note 2, ix.
  6. In "A Whole History of Genius," *Saturday Review of Literature*, IX, 141 (October 1, 1932).
  7. In "A Small View of D. H. Lawrence," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, XVI, 127 (Winter, 1940).
  8. I, 417.
  9. I, 452.
  10. *Letters of D. H. Lawrence* (edited by Aldous Huxley, Wm. Heinemann, London), p. 109.
  11. II, 149.
  12. II, 150.
  13. II, 105.
  14. II, 106.
  15. II, 151, 214, 215.
  16. II, 11.
  17. II, 214, 215, 216.
  18. II, 7. See also II, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13.
  19. II, 8.
  20. II, 7, 9.
  21. II, 11.
  22. II, 213.
  23. II, 7, 8, 10, 11, 26, 27, 28, 29.
  24. "The Status of D. H. Lawrence," by Henry Thornton Moore, *New Republic*, XCVII, 210 (December 21, 1938).
  25. II, 251.
  26. II, 286.
  27. II, 69.
  28. II, 306.
  29. II, 60-61.
  30. In "D. H. Lawrence: The Phoenix and the Grove," *New Republic*, LXXIII, 133 (December 14, 1932).
  31. II, 26, 27, 28.
  32. I, 72, 73, 225.
  33. II, 159.
  34. II, 278.
  35. II, 289.
  36. II, 280.
  37. In "Lawrence: Creator and Dissenter," *Saturday Review of Literature*, XXIX, 17 (December 7, 1946).
  38. For example, II, 111, 113, 114, 115, etc.
  39. For example, II, 26, 28, 29, etc.

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40. II, 119.
41. II, 27.
42. II, 41.
43. II, 43.
44. II, 111.
45. Tindall, p. 48.
46. Tindall, p. 57.
47. II, 120.
48. II, 221.
49. II, 222.
50. II, 115-18.
51. II, 55, 141.
52. II, 296.
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62. II, 143.
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65. II, 180.
66. II, 191.
67. II, 186-88.
68. II, 204, 205, 207.
69. II, 253-55, 258-61.
70. II, 185.
71. II, 165, 167, 168, 170, 172.
72. II, 183, 184, 197-99, 219.
73. II, 132.
74. II, 112.
75. II, 113.
76. II, 110.
77. II, 257.
78. II, 254-63.
79. II, 256.
80. II, 131.
81. II, 209.
82. II, 209-13.

83. "D. H. L.," *Harper's*, CLXXXVI, 463 (April, 1943).
84. II, 204.
85. Quoted by a correspondent in *Saturday Review of Literature*, VI, 1130 (June 14, 1930).
86. I, 334. See also I, 66, 96, 276, 279, 317, 452, 463, 499.
87. I, 14, 16, 133, 152, 174, 260, 300, 303, 318, 323; I, 23, 66; I, 9, 18, 325; I, 15, 44, 146, 177; I, 31, 116 ff., 426.
88. I, 54, 278; I, 160, 161, 315; I, 31, 56, 158; I, 108, 136, 358; I, 287; I, 11; I, 144, 148, 156, 270, 298, 299, 302, 306, 308, 310, 318; I, 16, 19; I, 91, 93, 98, 112, 121, 143, 145, 150, 173, 192, 251; I, 250, 275; I, 253; I, 264; I, 287.
89. I, 337.
90. *Saturday Review of Literature*, VI, 17 (August 3, 1929).